

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W  
-----190954Z 111429 /23-12

R 181424Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5322  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS  
SUBJECT: PROGRESS ON ELECTORAL REFORM BILL

1. ONE OF THE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 8TH KNESSET MAY HAVE BEEN TO PUT ON TRAIN ELECTORAL REFORM LEGISLATION. ALTHOUGH THE KNESSET FORMALLY ADJOURNED ON MARCH 16 AND WILL NOT SIT AGAIN IN REGULAR SESSION UNTIL AFTER THE MAY 17 ELECTION (TEL AVIV 1926), A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CURRENT KNESSET MAY BE CALLED TO GIVE A FIRST READING TO A BILL CHANGING THE SYSTEM FOR ELECTING KNESSET MEMBERS.

2. IN RECENT DAYS LABOR PARTY AND LIKUD MEMBERS OF THE KNESSET LAW COMMITTEE, WHERE A ELECTORAL REFORM BILL IS PRESENTLY BEING CONSIDERED, HAVE BEEN PRESSING FOR ACTION ON THE BILL AGAINST THE OPPOSITION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, ZERAH WARHAFTIG, A LEADER OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY. THE NRP, MAPAN (LABOR'S PARTNER IN THE ALIGNMENT) AND MOST OTHER SMALL PARTIES IN THE

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KNESSET (SHULAMIT ALONI'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IS AN EXCEPTION) OPPOSE TAMPERING WITH ISRAEL'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM. HOWEVER, THE BILL'S PROPONENTS HAVE FINALLY FORGED THROUGH ENOUGH COMMITTEE ACTION ON THE MEASURE TO MAKE A FIRST READING POSSIBLE IF A SPECIAL SESSION IS CALLED FOR THAT PURPOSE. A FIRST READING OF THE BILL IN THE 8TH KNESSET WOULD MEAN

THAT CONSIDERATION OF THE MEASURE COULD BE RESUMED IN THE 9TH KNESSET AT THE SAME POINT IN THE LEGISLATION PROCESS, I.E., WITHOUT REINTRODUCTION.

3. THE REFORM BILL PROVIDES FOR A MIXED CONSTITUENCY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM. IT CALLS FOR THE DIVISION OF ISRAEL INTO 16 DISTRICTS AND FOR ELECTION OF FIVE KNESSET MEMBERS FROM EACH OF THE DISTRICTS, A TOTAL OF 80. THE OTHER 40 KNESSET MEMBERS WOULD, AS AT PRESENT, BE ELECTED AT LARGE UNDER THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM.

4. PROGRESS ON ELECTORAL REFORM, WHICH IS AN ISSUE ALMOST AS OLD AS THE STATE, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PRECIPITATED BY THE HERUT PARTY'S (OF THE LIKUD BLOC) RECENT CHANGE FROM OPPOSITION TO SUPPORT OF A MODIFICATION OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM. BUT THE BREAK IN THE LEGISLATIVE LOG-JAM ALSO OWES MUCH TO YIGAEI YADIN'S INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF ELECTORAL REFORM. HE HAS GIVEN THE SUBJECT TOP PRIORITY IN THE DMC'S PLATFORM.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PROVISION FOR PART PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN THE BILL SHOULD ALLOW SMALL PARTIES SOME CHANCE TO CONTINUE TO BE REPRESENTED IN THE KNESSET, THEY ARE THOUGHT LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM A SWITCH TO EVEN A MODIFIED CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM. PASSAGE OF THE BILL SHOULD, AT ANY RATE, DISCOURAGE THE PROLIFERATION OF PARTIES AND LISTS (AT LAST COUNT, 28 SEPARATE LISTS HAVE APPLIED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCLUSION ON THE MAY 17 BALLOT AND MORE ARE EXPECTED) AND IT MAY MEAN THE DEMISE OF SOME GROUPS CURRENTLY IN THE KNESSET.  
DUNNIGAN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Executive Order:** N/A  
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**Review Markings:**  
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